

Japan

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said. "Just as a hotel major would intern in a hotel, these musicians will work in a musical environment every day. Its beneficial for them to live and work in a foreign culture and its important for the students' overall education."

"I've only seen the western half of the United States," said Mike Stephenson, a trumpet player. "So when the opportunity presented itself I took it."

The group rehearses a minimum of three times a week for roughly 90 minutes each rehearsal. Extra rehearsals have been scheduled periodically. In addition to memorizing music, the students are required to learn choreography for four shows that are 25 minutes in length.

But Leslie said the show band is filled with leaders who have shown a tremendous amount of perseverance to get the job done. "It's important because there are three to five shows every day for 10 weeks. To get that energy up every time as if it is the first time is tough. To me these students have the capabilities and

qualities to do that."

Stephenson said preparing for the trip has been tough because he doesn't have time to practice. "Most of my classes are ensembles and there is little time for individual practice. Practicing helps in the ensembles," he said.

"Learning the language and the culture is a lot harder than I expected," said Matt Velure, a music major and bass trombone player.

Living in cramped quarters, being away from home and on the other side of the globe is an added pressure to prepare for but the band members seems to be looking forward to it.

"I'm excited to learn about the culture of Japan and meeting the people," Velure said. "I want to learn everything I can about Japan."

"For the first couple of weeks it will be hard adjusting, but it should be fun," Stephenson said. "I expect a lot of work as far as performing six days a week, but the time off will be great."

Keeping up with their studies has been difficult as well—every class has been condensed from a 16-week course to a 5-week course.

Music department officials and professors made it possible for the students to take a limited number of classes by increasing the amount of time spent in each class for the five weeks before they leave.

Special arrangements were made for the band members to write a report about musical and cultural differences between Japan and the United States for an optional three credits. They were also given the opportunity to take private lessons, ensembles and a Japanese language and culture class.

Hession is taking music theory and ear training privately so he doesn't fall behind. "Its actually easier because its private, but I have to work harder," he said.

The Mitsui Corporation is funding the two-month trip.

This is the third time a full band from UNLV has traveled to Japan.

"Because we're in Las Vegas and because of the visibility of the UNLV music department and its performing groups, the invitation just became a reality," Leslie said.

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